



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



To work with the ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.

SRC Meeting October 8, 2019
Salve Regina University, Warwick
144 Metro Center Blvd, Warwick, RI 02886
4:00 P.M. –5:30 PM.

Present: Dr. Judith Drew, Chair SRC and Program Director, Rehabilitation Counseling Program at ([Salve Regina University](#))
Jack Ringland, Secretary SRC, Co-Coordinator of [Cross Disabilities Coalition](#)

Community members/CRP members:

Nina Fiasconaro, a Parent Advocate for a child with disabilities

Paul Harden, Director of [RI Small Business Development Center](#), URI

Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services of [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)

Christina Battista, representing the [RI Statewide Independent Living Council](#)

Anne Fartura, Peer Support Coordinator/Special Education at [RI Parent Information Network](#)

Lea Colardo, & Melissa Brusso, Educational Advocate at [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#)

Nicole Rico Serrano, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)

Office of Rehabilitation Services:

Ronald Racine (Associate Director), Linda Deschenes (Assistant Administrator of Operations), Natalia Montoya (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor), Joseph Murphy (Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation), John Valentine (Strategic Planning Supervisor)

Absent: Christine Botts, Joan Fino, Gail Lawson, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade

Guests: Barbara Fernandez, Legal Advocate for [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#)

1. Establish Quorum/Introductions Guests, ORS, and SRC – Quorum met.

2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions – There were none.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from May 7, 2019.

Motion – Jack Ringland made a motion. seconded by Christine Yankee, and unanimously approved, to accept the May 7, 2019 Minutes. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Paul Harden, Nina Fiasconaro, Jack Ringland, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)

4. Summary of Follow-ups from Meeting

* Work on updates to the VR State Plan. Membership will be asked to review changes for the upcoming renewal of the State Plan. SRC comments will be due at or around November 15th.

* Judi Drew will send out more information to the Council on the 30 By 30 Initiative.

5. The Office of Rehabilitation Services Director's Report – Ron Racine

- a) Waitlist - There are eight hundred people on the list. ORS has been removing twenty five people a month, which has resulted in an average wait time of ten months for those on the list. With additional funding. ORS will be removing three hundred this month and fifty a month moving forward. The goal is to get everyone off the Waitlist by in next year. ORS will continue to update the Council on the progress of this goal.

- b) [Rehabilitation Service Administration](#) (RSA) Monitoring Report was mostly positive in their review of 5 major categories. In Transition Services there were concerns about the Memorandums of Agreement not yet signed, but these will be completed in the next few weeks. The rest of the Transition Services were good. Supported Employment had no findings. Workforce Innovations had no findings. One finding in Program Eligibility regarding the sixty day eligibility times. Because of the Waitlist, ORS has been working to assign people to the appropriate categories, this includes additional documentation to make sure ORS is serving the most severely disabled. This has led to a more time to determine eligibility. ORS is working to reduce these times to meet the sixty day requirement. ORS is eighty percent compliance with a requirement goal of ninety percent. The last area of review was Fiscal, which had no findings and was pointed out for a positive program that ORS' CFO, Carol Mattson, is working on that will be taken up by other states as a better practice of compliance. ORS has until November 15, 2019 to respond to the RSA.
- c) Consumer Satisfaction Survey Report - John Valentine
 ORS and the SRC worked to redesign the surveys in 2019. Once this was done, ORS started a systematic surveying of clients based on active cases instead of the former practice of sending to clients whose cases were closed. The thinking behind the change is that current clients would be more engaged to comment in the moment, with their feedback helping ORS determine if changes need to be made in service delivery. Clients currently surveyed are in status eighteen, eligible with Employment Plan in place and engaging in services that are training or job related, and status twenty two, clients who are employed. Each month, two alphabetical last names are survey. April was A and B, May C and D, and so on.

Presented results from monthly surveys from April 2019 - July 2019. *(Full report available upon request)*

Key Findings.

1. Response rates higher than the old method by 8% with higher responses for June, 36 % and August, 23%.
2. 63% receiving assistance obtaining employment.
3. 76% indicating they are receiving services related directly towards their stated goals.
4. 80% feel ORS services match stated interests.
5. 75% getting responses from ORS Counselor within 2 days.
6. 84% felt ORS provided services in a timely manner.
7. Most important services provided and those that clients stated were most important to them match in many categories. The top 3 were; Supported Employment, Vocational Assessment and Vocational Exploration. Job Development and Job Placement came in 4th and 5th.
8. 78% responded that they were better prepared to enter employment.
9. Phone, email and in person meetings were the highest rated forms of communication with Counselors.
10. Clients rated these characteristics the highest received from Counselor; Encouragement, support. Respect and attentiveness.
11. Questions 15, how can ORS improve services and 16, has ORS changed my life, results did not line up with previous answers so ORS will keep looking at these further to see is a pattern emerges.
12. Highest response rates from 14 – 24yrs at 43%. Second 23 – 34 yrs. at 17%.

Feedback and moving forward on the surveys

- Clients were honest and for the most part the response rates were good.
- Curious to learn why some questions were not answered by all respondents and what might be their reasons for not answering.
- Conflicting results especially for questions fifteen and sixteen may be related to response rates by age. For example, younger people may feel that two days for response is too long. And since they are young, broad statements like “ORS has changed my life”; may not resonate as much as with older clients.
- ORS added one question to ask clients what their disabilities are, if they chose to disclose.
- ORS is also looking to develop the new survey in alternative formats.

- The SRC had concerns that rolling the survey out monthly might be difficult for the support staff, but ORS felt it is worth trying it monthly for now.
 - The findings will be shared with the Council at the quarterly SRC meetings.
 - Question could be asked to gain a better understanding of the client's cultural background.
 - In talking about people with disabilities always use person model first. People First Language (PFL) is a way of communicating that reflects knowledge and respect for people with disabilities by choosing words that recognize the person first and foremost as the primary reference and not his or her disability.
 - Questions should also be translated into another language as needed.
- d) State Plan Update – The major rewrite is due in March 2020. The Governor's Workforce Board has until next week to get ORS their draft. ORS has done its part of the Plan and is sending the SRC the documents this week for review. WIOA requires seamless moves between different systems in the state to better integrate the entire system.

6. SRC Chair's Report – Dr. Judith Drew

- a) Movement of VR services into the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) and merging funding. WIOA requires states to fit pockets of money serving the same group of people. This alignment also brings together various entities in workforce development, educational, elderly affairs and human resource programs to create a seamless customer-focused service delivery network that integrates service delivery across programs, enhances access to services, and improves long-term employment outcomes. Some states have achieved this changed smoothly while others are struggling to work out the funding processes. In some cases, the DLTs are not supplying the funding for the VR agencies to do their work. This funding issue was discussed at the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Coalition (VRCC) conference. The (VRCC) is made up of eighteen organizations that serve people with disabilities. This coalition was established to give rehabilitation programs a say in the development of WIOA.
- b) Introduced the 30 By 30 Campaign. Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Coalition (VRCC) discussion about the SRC supporting the research of the 30 By 30 Initiative; seeks 30% employment of people with disabilities by 2030. Does the SRC want to formally support this initiative? And if so, what can we do to contribute to this process? Can we commit to do this even if we don't get a full 30%?

Motion - *Christine Yankee made a motion seconded by Nina Fiasconaro and unanimously approve to have the Council support the 30 By 30 Initiative. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Paul Harden, Nina Fiasconaro, Jack Ringland, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)*

- c) Recognized members who are leaving the Council this November, for their service, Lea Colardo, Elizabeth Graves, Gail Lawson, Dan Perrioni, and Vincent Rossi. Invited them to attend the May breakfast meeting next year.
- d) Discussion of SRC support for further research by Chrisann Schiro-Geist who is doing a study to determine Rehabilitation Counselor Degree type as a predictor of client outcomes. If the SRC wants to get RI involved in the survey there is a cost for the survey software and cost to add it to the VR system and someone at ORS would have to be assigned to monitor and correlate the data. Since Rhode Island does not hire Rehabilitation Counselors without Master's degrees, there wouldn't be a way for comparison. ORS is not opposed to participating in the study but there would have to be more information provided to determine if it is appropriate for us to actually participate in this study.
- e) New Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Mark Schultz, importance of his appointment. It has been an appointment in waiting for over two years. It is very exciting to have him as Commissioner.

7. Subcommittee Updates

* State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance – In late October and early November the committee will be taking up the proposed changes in the ORS portion of the State Plan

* Training Committee - Lea Colardo

The training meeting was a success with a good turnout. The committee will review the National Coalition of SRCs training materials, coming out in early November, to add to our outlines for future trainings.

8. Correspondence - There were none.

9. New Business Barbara Fernandez, a Legal Advocate from [Disability Rights Rhode Island \(DRRI\)](#) will be joining the SRC. Membership are excited to add her to the Council.

Motion – *Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Anne Fartura, and unanimously approved to send a request for the appointment of Barbara Fernandez to the Governor. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Paul Harden, Nina Fiasconaro, Jack Ringland, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)*

Anne Fartura distributed information on [10th Annual Transition 101 Parent Conference](#) to be held on November 22nd. Click link for more information.

10. Public Comments -There were none.

11. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Motion – *Paul Harden made a motion seconded by Anne Fartura, and unanimously approved, to adjourn the meeting. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Paul Harden, Nina Fiasconaro, Jack Ringland, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)*

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Baker
Nancy Baker, RISRC Facilitator